

Constantino's Death and Character 315

ing Constantine seated in a four-horse chariot, and being drawn up to heaven by a celestial hand stretched out to him from the clouds. It was a device which could offend neither Christian nor pagan. To the former it would recall the triumphant ascent of Elijah; the latter would regard it as the token of a natural apotheosis. The hand might equally well be the hand of God or of Jupiter,

Such is the story of the Emperor's baptism,

and his burial as recounted by Eusebius. There

is, however, one important detail to be added and

one important question to be asked. Constantine

was baptised by an Arian bishop. To the Athana-

sian party and to the ecclesiastical historians of

Middle Ages this was a lamentable circumstance

which troubled and exorcised their minds.

It deeply grieved them to think that their patron

Constantine should have been admitted into the

company of the faithful by the dangerous heretic

who had been the bitterest enemy of their idol,

Athanasius. But with a forbearance to which they

were usually ready they agreed to pass over the

episode in comparative silence and remember not

the virtues of the first Christian Emperor.

It still remains to be asked why Constantine did

not formally enter the Church until he was on his

deathbed. There had been no lukewarmness about his Christianity*. He was not one to be afflicted

doubt*. There had never been any
lib reverting to paganism, danger of
In the last
few years,